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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000527

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKISH READ ON BAGHDAD/CAIRO/ISTANBUL CONFERENCES  
ON IRAQ

REF: A. ANKARA 508

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 782

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkish MFA Special Representative on Iraq Oguz Celikkol, just back from meetings in Tehran, told DCM March 8 that the Iranians have committed to participate at both the March 10 preparatory meeting in Baghdad and the expanded Istanbul ministerial, which the Turks hope will take place March 31. The Turks say both the Iranians and Syrians prefer that the immediate follow-on take place in Istanbul, with the neighbors' meeting to follow in Cairo, to avoid losing momentum post-Baghdad. Celikkol believes all will support this proposal if it comes from the Iraqis, and requested specifically that the USG raise this with the GOI asap to allow it to be worked in advance and agreed on Saturday. He reiterated his concern (reftel) that, in order to ensure success, the Baghdad agenda not be too weighty. The Turks still do not know about Saudi participation in Baghdad or follow-ons. Celikkol will attend the March 16 Iraq Compact meeting in New York. End summary.

#### Tehran Meetings

[1](#)2. (C) During his March 7 meetings in Tehran, Celikkol learned that the Iranians have committed to attend both the March 10 Baghdad meeting and the follow-on neighbors/P-5 meeting, which the Iranians prefer take place soonest in Istanbul. On Baghdad, while Iran had no pre-conditions, Celikkol's interlocutors told him it would improve the atmosphere if their arrested diplomats were first released. Turkish FM Gul had earlier advised Iranian FM Mottaki against making that a pre-condition, telling him that success in Baghdad would make conditions more conducive to solution of that problem. The Iranian vice minister responsible for the MFA's international law department, Said Abbas Araghchi, will lead their delegation to Baghdad.

[1](#)3. (C) At the top of Tehran's agenda is supporting the al-Maliki government. Their second agenda item involves setting a timetable for withdrawal of "occupation" forces with a gradual handover of responsibility for security to the GOI. Tehran holds the US and UK responsible for Iraq's current sectarian violence, which had not been present under Saddam. Celikkol told the Iranians that Turkey, too, supports the al-Maliki government, but that Sunni participation in the political process had been premised on the promise of constitutional changes to allow Iraq to be governed by consensus. The Iraqis had achieved that on the hydrocarbons law and could do so here, too.

#### Baghdad Meeting

[1](#)4. (C) On Baghdad, Celikkol stressed that the meeting must be successful and reiterated Turkish concerns that the Iraqis not press for too ambitious an agenda. As no papers had been

distributed in advance, any attempt to get delegations to agree on a text in Baghdad would be futile. There would be no time for behind-the-scenes work and deals would have to go back to governments for approval. The Iranians, he noted, did not even want a joint statement. The Turks believe the Baghdad agenda should consist of statements by PM al-Maliki and FM Zebari, agreement on the venue for the follow-on meeting and formation of a committee to prepare for that meeting. Celikkol shared with us Baghdad's proposed agenda, which currently includes negotiation/adoption of an official document and formation of working groups on three topics: (a) security coordination/cooperation; (b) Iraqi displaced people in neighboring countries; and (c) fuel and energy supplies to Iraq. Celikkol noted that the last topic was a matter for the Turkish private sector, not the government. The Turks remain concerned that they do not yet have confirmation that the Saudis -- whom Celikkol described as not wanting to lend support to al-Maliki -- would participate in Baghdad.

15. (C) Both Iran and Syria had made it clear to the Turks that they favored Istanbul as the venue for the follow-on conference and believe it should take place as soon as possible after Baghdad so as not to lose momentum. Celikkol said that, while the Turks had agreed with the Egyptians that Cairo would come after Baghdad, Ankara believes that if the proposal comes from the Iraqis to flip Cairo and Istanbul, all -- including the Egyptians -- would accept it. He asked that the USG raise this immediately with FM Zebari so it can be worked before March 10 and agreed.

16. (C) The Turks' preferred date for an Istanbul ministerial is Saturday, March 31. They would invite at least neighbors plus P-5. If the USG deems it important, the Turks are open to pressing for G-8 attendance, since some G-8 countries could be important economically for Iraq. He noted that Iran

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and Syria were framing an Istanbul conference as "neighbors" with the P-5 as observers. Celikkol made clear to the Iranians that the P-5 would be active participants.

#### Iraq Compact and Iraqi Reconstruction Fund

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17. (C) Celikkol accepted our invitation to attend the March 16 Iraq Compact meeting in New York. He will attend for the Turks and views it as an excellent opportunity to work with Ambassador Satterfield on preparations for the Istanbul ministerial. He added that the Iraqi Reconstruction Fund meeting would be held March 19-20 in Istanbul, with follow-on Turkish-Iraqi bilateral economic meetings that would likely include a number of Iraqi ministers.

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